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The Bang-Jensen Case

In November, 1956, Povl Bang-Jensen, former Danish diplomat, and an assistant secretary of the U.N. Commission on Hungary, tried to tell the State Department that there was serious trouble in the U.N. and the Soviet agents had infiltrated the U.S. Intelligence Service.

He knew these people, and he was well known to our State Department. The Dane wanted to talk with Allen W. Dulles, until recently chief of the CIA. He continued trying until June, 1957, without success. In December of that year he was suspended by the U.N. when he refused to turn over to the Secretariat the names of Hungarians who, fearing reprisals, made anonymity a condition of their testimony.

Bang-Jensen was found dead in Alley Pond Park, Queens, New York, Thanksgiving morning, November 24, 1959. Since he died under mysterious circumstances, which could have been suicide or murder, Senator Dodd directed a Senate Internal Security committee inquiry. A subcommittee report has been made public, and while many solid arguments against suicide were presented, "about the most that can be said on the basis of the information available today is that it is still unclear whether it was suicide or murder."

However, it is evident, and the report holds, that the Soviet terror apparatus may have had adequate motivation for the liquidation of Bang-Jensen.

The report sharply criticizes the State Department, but finds no fault with the CIA nor with the FBI, which took the stand that they could not act in the case without authorization of the State Department. The result was that time elapsed and nothing was done to clear up the mystery.

"From the standpoint of national security," the report says, "the entire record in dealing with Bang-Jensen's request (to talk to Mr. Dulles) must be considered a lamentable example of procrastination and indecision."

The big question remains. Did the diplomat commit suicide as the New York police reported, or was he murdered by Soviet agents because he knew too much? New light has been shed on the case. More may follow, until there is no longer any mystery.